

The Phantom Lover

By Ruby Ayres

THIS STARTS THE STORY
Micky Melowes, matrimonial catch, sitting on the street, and a girl who had just left a friend, Ashton, who says he is leaving town and his sweetheart is to be married. Micky, who is a friend of Ashton's, decides to deliver a letter to the girl. He goes to the street, and instead of delivering the letter Ashton gave him, he writes another letter to Ashton, and signs Ashton's name to it. The letter comes to Ashton. One day when the letter comes, Ashton, who is in the house, reads it. He is surprised to find that it is from Ashton, and that Micky is Ashton's friend. Ashton writes another letter to Ashton, and sends it to Ashton. Ashton, who is in the house, reads it. He is surprised to find that it is from Ashton, and that Micky is Ashton's friend. Ashton writes another letter to Ashton, and sends it to Ashton. Ashton, who is in the house, reads it. He is surprised to find that it is from Ashton, and that Micky is Ashton's friend.

AND HERE IT CONTINUES
ASHTON had soon found consolation. Micky thought savagely. He wondered what Ashton would say if he could know. What was Driver thinking about it all? Driver was as safe as the bank of England; but, all the same, it was not altogether pleasant to feel that he had had to give himself away to his friend.

He looked up at the clock. Past 12. There would not be another post in the night. Ashton had not answered his note, and two whole days had elapsed. June Mason was mixing perfume the following morning when a little knock came at her door.

She looked up from her work and listened; after a second she resumed her occupation, briskly.

"Come in," she said.

She did not raise her eyes when the door opened, though she knew quite well who had entered the room, and for a second Ashton's shadow stood on the threshold hesitatingly.

"Come in. You've got some news; I can see by your face that you have," Ashton laughed and flushed.

"Oh, I have," she said tremulously. "Such wonderful news."

"Humph!" said June dryly. "From the young man, of course? Well, is he on his way home, and have you got to a wedding dress in the next five minutes or something?"

"Oh, no, it isn't anything like that," said Ashton. "There was a shade of regret in her voice. 'But he's in Paris; he says he's not staying there, but he has to pay a business call.'"

June gave a rather unattractive sniff, but Ashton was too engrossed to notice. He seems to have been very lucky; she went on. "He hadn't got very much money when he went away, but he's got some now; he does it in a very nice way, and he's got a little extra."

June looked at him. "Isn't it wonderful good of him? I suppose I ought not to take it; but he says that if things had turned out as he hoped, we should have been married, and so..."

June rose to her feet. She looked chagrined; she had been so sure that this man was a rotter, that it was a bit of a setback to hear this news.

"You take it, my dear, and don't be a goose," she said promptly. "As he says, if you were his wife you'd take it, and as you're going to be married, it's quite the right thing to do."

June looked at him. "I hope you won't let your silly pride make you send it back; you'd only hurt his feelings."

"And so I shall stay on here," Ashton said after a moment. "And if you think you would still like me to share this room..."

June promptly pounced upon her. "You darling! It's too good to be true. Of course, I should love it! I'll go and tell Mother Ashton straight away; it will put her in a grand temper for a month."

"I've got to go out," declared Ashton. "I had an appointment at half-past two, but I'll have to come to tea with you."

"Very well, then, 4 o'clock. But you need to find a berth now. You're a lady of leisure."

"But I shall try all the same. I don't mean to be lazy just because he's so good to me. I shall have all I can get to do."

"They'll rob you," June protested. "They'll rob you, I know. What agents are you dealing with?"

Ashton laughed. "There might have been something in the answer she received. 'Call again tomorrow, if you please.'"

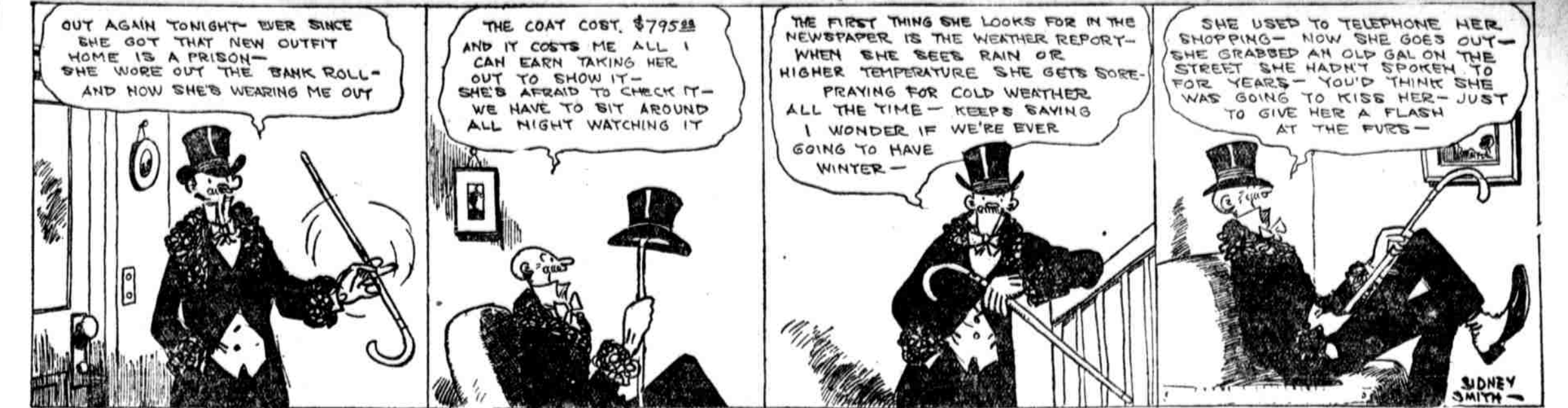
Ashton went out dispiritedly. There were so many girls of her own class and age in the bare waiting room; she felt quite sure that they would all get berths before she had a chance.

She felt glad that she had June Mason to go back to. June was always sympathetic. She went straight upstairs to the sitting-room with the mauve cushions.

June opened the door before she had time to knock.

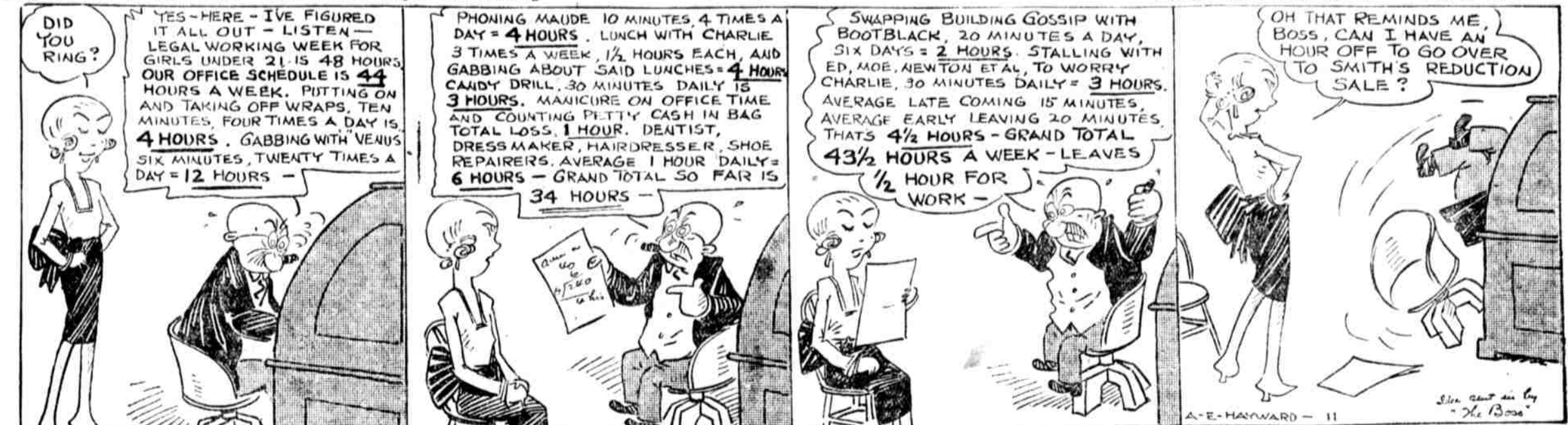
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By Sidney Smith



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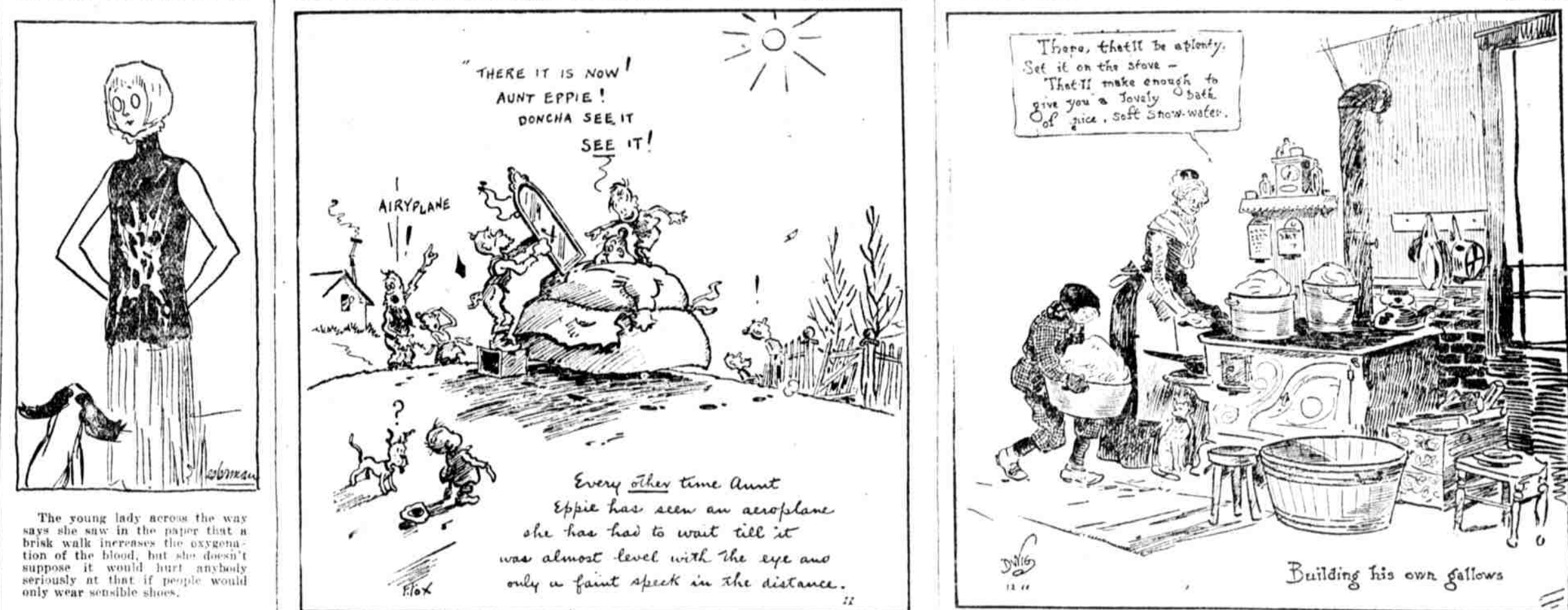
The Young Lady Across the Way

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